

STATE APPROVED SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS (SASC) EXEMPTION FROM STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

Students with disabilities are expected to take part in the statewide academic assessment program in one of the following ways:

- ❖ participate in the general statewide assessment without accommodations;
- ❖ participate in the general statewide assessment with accommodations; or
- ❖ participate in the alternate assessment, available only for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who meet specific criteria.

State assessment policies place a great deal of responsibility on districts to include all students. Districts must juggle state requirements, student needs, and parents' wishes. Despite a district's best efforts, situations will arise that prohibit the inclusion of every student. Extended absence, family vacations, significant medical and emotional issues, and parent refusals are but a few of the issues that are not entirely within the district's control. Students who do not participate are reported in two different ways on assessment reports: did not participate for state approved reasons and did not participate for other reasons. The distinction is particularly important in Reading and Mathematics accountability reporting since the second case negatively affects reported participation rates, while the first does not. The state approved reasons, called State Approved Special Considerations (SASC), fall within five broad areas: Medical Emergency/Serious Illness, Severe Emotional Distress, Death in the Family, Student who Qualifies for the Alternate Assessment but enrolls after March 1st, and Students who participate in another state's assessment system. In all cases, the exemptions must be approved the NH Department of Education and are acknowledged with an email receipt to the school contact and district superintendent.

SASC Procedure

Three of the five SASCs (SASC-1, SASC-2, and SASC-3) are based on significant medical or emotional disruptions to the student's life. In these three cases, the request is based on a decision made by an educational team that includes the student's teachers, school counselor, principal, parents or legal guardian, medical or mental health professional, and, if possible, the student. The other two SASCs (SASC-4 and SASC-5) are administrative in nature and thus the request may be made by district personnel.

The Educational Team must gather information, consult with appropriate people, document the team discussion and offer a final recommendation, **in writing**, regarding whether to request a SASC. Documentation must include the basis for this recommendation.

The Educational Team must send the documented recommendation to the district Superintendent for final review and action.

The District Superintendent must review the team recommendation, make a final decision based on the documented information; completes, signs, and forwards the appropriate *District Assurances* together with the student information form to the NH Department of Education.

The Director of Statewide Assessment reviews the submitted *District Assurances Form*, and if needed, contacts the principal or the office of the Superintendent for clarification or other action. The Department issues a written receipt with decision to the district Superintendent (copied to the principal) for each request for a SASC.

Note: The decision to assess or not to assess a student should not depend on the outcome of the request to the NH DoE. If a student can be assessed, he or she should be assessed. The result of an approved exemption is applied to assessment and accountability reporting.

To view the complete detailed SASC document or to obtain a copy of specific SASC forms visit:

http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/assessment/alt_assess/index.htm